

VOICES *of* VETERANS

TEXAS VETERANS LAND BOARD

Fall/Winter 2009



My Fellow Veterans:

Five generations of my family have served in times of war. As a former Marine and Vietnam veteran, I know every veteran has a story to tell. The Texas Veterans Land Board *Voices of Veterans™* program wants to find and preserve as many of these important oral histories as possible. Through these stories of bravery, fear and fellowship, our future generations of Texans can learn lessons not found in any textbook – like what it means to sacrifice for a cause greater than yourself, and how to face adversity against great odds. Free to any Texas veteran, the *Voices of Veterans™* program provides a lasting legacy for historians, friends and family members, and helps us to honor and remember the sacrifices of all Texas veterans.



Semper Fi,

JERRY PATTERSON,
Chairman
Texas Veterans
Land Board



**Keifer Marshall - taken
on Guam during WWII**

Memories of Iwo Jima

Keifer Marshall served with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment in World War II. His unit saw extensive combat, including the most iconic battle in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps – Iwo Jima. Located on a small volcanic island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, more than 6,800 Marines and corpsmen died in a fight that lasted from February 19th to March 26th, 1945. In

the following excerpts, Mr. Marshall shares with us some of his memories about that vital bloody struggle.

"I was in F Company 2-9 and Colonel Canyon was our colonel. I saw him one time I think. But where we were, the island was small, 5-by-2 (miles) I think they said it was, and shaped like a pork chop, and Suribachi was the volcano on the high point, so the landing was made I think on the west side, or east side of Suribachi, and the 4th and 5th Divisions were lined up, and the 3rd Division was in the area there, and the 5th Division went across to take Suribachi, and they did that, got that secured. The 4th Division was on our right and the 5th Division was on the left, and we were in the middle going up the island to the north, and made some progress.

"We got along pretty good and then we got up to the north, it was the second airfield, and it was a shell hitting somewhere all the time. I've forgotten somewhere I heard the casualties mounted by the second on there, and we had a tremendous amount of casualties. I've always told my wife I just happened to be in the best time and place where a shell didn't hit because

WWW.VOICESOFVETERANS.ORG

WHY ORAL HISTORY?



Nothing is more powerful than the spoken word. Imagine if we could listen to the stories of heroes such as David Crockett, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin in their own words.

Thanks to digital technology, we can now record the special memories of today's heroes and share them with future generations of Texans.

"The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans."

Military history often highlights stories of major battles, equipment or famous leaders. Yet, the stories of

the men and women on the frontlines are often overlooked. Stories of courage, fear, fellowship and inspiration are lost with every passing year.

The Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans program wants to record these stories to remind future Texans that ordinary men and women, when faced with adversity, can accomplish extraordinary things. The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans.

they hit everywhere, and there were very few Marines that made it all the way through there with us.

"As we got to the north end, that's where most of the history of the battle, half the casualties were made trying to take that north end. Cushman's pocket, Hill 362, those different areas of Iwo Jima. Our outfit got cut off up there and we were cut off for about 36 hours.

"The only officer we had left was Captain O'Bannon. I believe his name was, O'Bannon. He was at a radio and he'd radio back to where the colonel was the kind of trouble we were in. And the colonel said,

"Save yourself and get out of there!" Well, he wouldn't do that. He took the rest of us, mighty few of us, took those that we had left and we were in a shell hole and he'd call for the tanks to come up and the tanks got up there and helped us get out. They pulled us up underneath the hatch of the tank and the wounded that way, and then the rest of us walked behind the tank. But we were surrounded. That's the way it was on Iwo Jima most of the time. When you'd take 100 yards of ground, they were behind you and on each side of you. You'd take the people in front, but they were everywhere and they were all underground. We never saw very many people during the daylight. So what we had was hand grenades and we had M1 rifles and carbines and we didn't have any officers. I think in my platoon, we had maybe seven or eight second lieutenants. Some of them had been in Quantico and they flew them out there after the battle was started and came out there, but it was a pretty tough engagement."

Marshall enlisted as a private in the Marine Corps after having already spent several years at the University of Texas as a star football player.

"Private, that's right, and most of us were privates or maybe a few corporals, but we lost all the noncoms, we lost most of the officers. Captain O'Bannon was not one of them that had been lost. And we got right back behind, we were in the second line of defense about 50 yards behind the front lines. We all dug in for the night and he came around to see that everybody had something to eat and were located, and there weren't many of us, very few of us. So the next morning, we all got up and got ready to go. Captain O'Bannon was lying in the bottom of his foxhole and couldn't move. His eyes were open, but he just had complete combat fatigue. So they had to take him off and I think he got the Navy Cross

" We had a tremendous amount of casualties. I've always told my wife I just happened to be in the best time and place where a shell didn't hit because they hit everywhere. "



Two Marines in a hole hastily dug from smoking sulphur rock (note mine and refinery background) stand ready to repel Japanese snipers, many of them in Marine uniform. Left to right: Pvt. Keifer Marshall 991007 and Cpl. Allen L. Griffith 462189. Photo by Sgt. Bob Cooke, DOD.

**THANKS TO
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for what he had done that day. Then we were still trying to get rid of that Cushman's Pocket. Colonel Cushman was our battalion command, and he ended up being a Commandant in the Marine Corps later on I think. Well we finally got the thing secured after 20 some odd days, and then we had a lot of mopping up to do. We were the last troops to leave the island and turn it over to the Army.

The 9th Marines were the last ones off of there. So it was an experience you'll never forget and you wouldn't take anything for it, but I'd sure hate to go through it again."

"The Marine Corps is a great outfit and we had had very little training when those of us that were in that replacement group went in there, but we knew how to use a rifle and use hand grenades. In hand-to-hand combat, that's all you need to know really. And we had, first time I had ever experienced it, rockets. We'd always been on artillery, you know, and that island, the ships around it were everywhere, all kinds of ships with all kinds of weapons, and they just bombed it, bombed it, bombed it. The Air Corps bombed it for 80 some odd days, but the Japanese were all underground."

How It Works

1

Complete and mail the screening form at the end of this newsletter.

Let us know you're ready to tell your story.

2

Introduction by phone.

When we get your contact info, our staff will call to chat about your story. This helps us organize our work and lets us know more about you.

3

Set an interview date.

Once approved, the staff will work with you and our volunteer interviewer to pick the best day for your interview.

4

Tell your story.

Either by phone or in person, a typical Voices of Veterans interview lasts 1 to 2 hours.

5

Add pictures if you want.

Please feel free to send us copies of wartime photos, documents or other memorabilia to enrich your story.

6

Proof your interview.

You will have a chance to review and edit the transcript of your interview for accuracy. We want to get it right.

7

Get your story on CD.

You will receive a free transcript and 4 free audio CDs of your interview, along with a frameable certificate.

“[The Japanese would] try to get in a foxhole with you, you know, so there was lots of hand-to-hand stuff with them. And at the end of the thing they were desperate. They didn’t have any water, didn’t have any food, but they never quit fighting, never quit trying.”

“... their favorite trick was, if you refused to answer, you got two options. One, they would take out their Luger, put it on the desk and say we have ways to make you answer ...”

Andrew Bardagjy, USN

*POW on interrogation by Nazi SS
recorded 2 December, 2008*

“I found these people and they had on a German uniform with a gun. Of course we just threw our hands up ... and they didn’t want us. I saw that Chetnik emblem on his cap and I said well, we’re among friends.”

Donald Landrum, USAAF

*Shot down over Nazi territory
recorded 17 April, 2008*

“Well, being a Christian, it was bad to think about trying to kill someone, but if somebody’s shooting at you, you know good and well you’re going to shoot back ... and that way were doing a duty, we thought, to the country ...”

Roy Goad, U.S. Army

recorded 8 January, 2008

“I know one of the guys asked me one time ... was you ever scared? I said yeah, one time. I said I was scared from the time that first damn bomb hit, until the end of the war when I got home. That’s just about the way it was ...”

Albert Kamenicky, USN

*Pearl Harbor survivor
recorded 2 December, 2008*

Mr. Marshall and his fellow Marines had to deal with an enemy force that had spent years digging tunnels and caves on Iwo Jima. Here he recalls his memories of the Japanese Army.

“That’s right, the caves. And you had to dig them out, and there at the end we were trying to get them to surrender and none of them would surrender. I’ve got great admiration for the Japanese Army because they were dedicated and they knew at the end they didn’t have much chance, but they never quit.”

The most famous image from the battle was of the flag raising atop Mount Suribachi. Taken by AP photographer Joe Rosenthal, the picture would later grace thousands of war bond posters and would ultimately be made into the Marine Memorial in Arlington, Va. Mr. Marshall witnessed that defining moment.

“I could see it and it was a great experience. Every guy got out of what they were doing and looked at it, all the ships blew their horns, their whistles, and it was euphoric. But that was just the beginning at that time. It was about the fourth day I think that the flag went up.

“That Japanese leader at Mount Suribachi was some kind of general. They’d had time to build it, the defense of it. It couldn’t have been more perfect. He had it completely so anywhere you were, they could hit you, you know. It’s really something. Admiral Nimitz said that ‘uncommon valor was a common virtue,’ and it was true. These corpsmen, it was unbelievable what they did. And the stretcher bearers that’d have to go get those guys and take them back and see all that firing, and then at night, the Japanese were out active. They’d try to get in a foxhole with you, you know, so there was lots of hand-to-hand stuff with them. And at the end of the thing they were desperate. They didn’t have any water, didn’t have any food, but they never quit fighting, never quit trying. The tank flamethrowers what really helped us, you know? They were great, particularly for the pillboxes, but in those caves, they could take that tank and be back 75 yards and put that fire out before that cave. Not many of them surrendered. We tried to tell them to go back and tell the Japanese troops that we want them to come out and nothing would happen to them. This one Japanese soldier went back in, came back and said they’d blow up this whole thing. Sure enough, they blew up the whole area and nearly killed all of them, killed some Marines that were around it outside of it. But they were something else, they really were.”



**EVERY VETERAN HAS A STORY TO TELL.
TELL US YOURS.**



I WANT TO TELL MY STORY.

In order to help us learn more about you and your service record, please complete this screening form to the best of your knowledge. Thank you.

(Mr.) (Mrs.)

Your Name

(Mr.) (Mrs.)

Spouse or Other Contact Name

Street Address

City

State

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Other Phone

FAX

Email address

Service Branch:

Last Rank:

to

Dates of Service (e.g. 1946 to 1951)

Conflict / Theater of Operations

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Other Items of Interest

Please mail form to:
Texas Veterans Land Board, P.O. Box 12873, Austin TX 78711-9788.
Or you may fax it to 512-475-1415.
Call 800-252-VETS (8387) for more info.